DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 463 520 CS 510 845

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TITLE	Parental Involvement in Reading Development.
PUB DATE	2002-05-00
NOTE	62p.; Master of Arts Thesis, Kean University.
PUB TYPE	Dissertations/Theses - Masters Theses (042) -- Tests/Questionnaires (160)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Family Influence; Grade 1; *Parent Participation; Primary Education; *Reading Aloud to Others; *Reading Improvement; Reading Motivation; Reading Research; Reading Skills

ABSTRACT

Research indicates that parental involvement in activities that support academic areas is directly correlated with reading achievement and development. This study stresses the importance of reading aloud to your child, the connections between reading aloud at home and at school, the value of implementing hands-on literacy based activities that integrate across the curriculum, and the impact of a good parent-teacher partnership. The study took place over a six-week intervention period for 20 interested first grade students and their parents/guardians. The participants were able to listen to a story which was read aloud, complete accompanying hands-on activities, and share feelings and attitudes in the "Author's Chair," in order to enhance reading and language development and skills. The results have indicated that through the family literacy intervention, the children's reading skills have improved, as well as the enhancement of their interest in reading and completing literacy based activities. (Contains 105 references and 3 tables of data. Appendixes contain pre- and posttest questionnaires [in English and Spanish], and a book report worksheet.) (Author/RS)

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Parental Involvement in Reading Development

Karen A. Colgan

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Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Master of Arts Degree in
Reading Specialization
Kean University

May, 2002

CS 510 845

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this study to both my mother and my father, who have instilled a love of reading in me at a very young age. They both have supported me with their knowledge, wisdom, encouragement, and most of all, their love. Thank you, Mom and Dad!

Abstract

Research indicates that parental involvement in activities that support academic areas is directly correlated with reading achievement and development. This study stresses the importance of reading aloud to your child, the connections between reading aloud at home and at school, the value of implementing hands-on literacy based activities that integrate across the curriculum, and the impact of a good parent-teacher partnership. The study took place over a six-week intervention period for twenty, interested first grade students and their parents/guardians. The participants were able to listen to a story which was read aloud, complete accompanying hands-on activities, and share feelings and attitudes in the "Author's Chair", in order to enhance reading and language development and skills. The results have indicated that through the family literacy intervention, the children's reading skills have improved, as well as, the enhancement of their interest in reading and completing literacy based activities.

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PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN READING DEVELOPMENT

Introduction

As early as the 19th century people taught their children reading by reading aloud to them (Durkin, 1974). The existing body of research showed that parents and teachers exhibited varieties of styles in reading aloud to children, which had an important impact on children's literacy development (Durkin, 1966; Teale & Sulzby, 1986). The literature reveals that parents' involvement in their young children's early reading development is an important prerequisite to school success (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1984; Wolfendale, 1983). Studies on family literacy patterns suggest that parental participation in literacy activities vary between families and family members (Cochran-Smith, 1984; Crawford, 1985).

Because mothers have played the most traditional role in the education of young children, much of the research on parents' contribution to early literacy development has focused on mother-child interaction. Studies suggest, however, that fathers want to be involved with their children's literacy development when given opportunities to do things they feel are interesting and capable of doing (Ortiz, 1994: Ortiz & Stile, 1996).

Research indicates that reading aloud to young children is one of the most influential factors that parents and teachers can offer children in helping them develop literacy (Clay,1966; Goodman, 1967; Harste, 1984.) Storyreading and booksharing play an important role in children's learning. However, there is a

need for more study on a number of aspects of the impact of parents' reading aloud to their children to develop their literacy.

This review explores the literature regarding the history of reading aloud to children, the importance of reading aloud, and the connections between reading aloud at home and school. Included in the discussion are the impact of fathers reading aloud to their children and parent-teacher partnerships relative to reading aloud.

Historical Perspectives of Reading Aloud

Reading to children as a way of developing literacy is not a new concept. Durkin (1974) pointed out that "... the family's role in teaching reading has a long history. In fact, the descriptions of the earliest education in the United States indicated that beginning reading was once taught more often in a kitchen than in a classroom" (p.136). In 1862, Tolstoy (as cited in Taylor, 1983) wrote of the first "rational and immutable" method of teaching reading. It consisted of the teacher reading as a mother would read with her child, and thus Tolstoy called it the "domestic method." Tolstoy (1967) believed that "this method will always remain the best and only one for teaching people to read and read fluently" (p.264). Huey (1908) also recognized the importance of parents reading aloud to children and wrote that "the secret of it all lies in the parents' reading aloud to and with their children" (p.332). It was not until the late 1970's and early 1980's that the academic community acknowledged these early recognitions about reading to children and showed an interest in storyreading.

From the 1920's through the 1960's, the educational practice of reading was dominated by the concept of reading readiness and the programs and testing associated with it (Durkin, 1966; 1974; 1978). This did not provide the theoretical basis and support for the use of storyreading to children either at home or at school, and regarded early storyreading as irrelevant to literacy development (Durkin, 1966; 1974; 1978). Furthermore, the role of parents in the development of children's literacy was considered to be unimportant. Teale and Sulzby (1986) noted that "not much attention was paid to the issue of pre-first-grade reading and writing.... The general belief was that literacy development did not begin until the child encountered formal instruction in school," (p.viii).

Sheldon and Carrillo's (1952) research touched on the issue of parents reading aloud to children and found that as the number of books in the home increased, so did the percent of good readers. They stated that, although they could not determine if this relationship resulted "from the attitude instilled in children by familiarity with books throughout their developmental years" (p.265), evidence pointed to it as a strong possibility.

Durkin's (1966) in-depth research in the area of early literacy development investigated children's experiences prior to school for signs of literacy acquisition. In trying to determine what circumstances existed that enabled these young children to come to school already knowing how to read, Durkin concluded that being read to created an interest in reading (p.137). For many years the classroom experiences of many teachers and results from research projects such as Durkin's (1966) had indicated that the reading readiness concept was

theoretically and practically inappropriate. It has only been since the late 1970's that a substantial and unified challenge to the traditional approach has come about.

The work of researchers like Clay (1966), Goodman (1967), and Harste (1984) has helped to shift the perspective away from reading readiness to emergent literacy, and has brought greater attention to the roles of parents, teachers and storybooks in the development of children's literacy. Cullinan (1989), Donelson and Nilson (1989) and Huck, Helper and Hickman (1987) noted that being surrounded by storybooks and supportive adults helps children in their active acquisition of literacy just as being surrounded by oral language is a necessary factor in learning to talk. Mass (1982) argued that concepts of literacy develop gradually and that in a natural language environment, saturated with good stories, meaningful conversations, and abundant writing materials, the process can begin even before a child goes to school.

Since then, a significant body of research has emerged on the topic of reading aloud to children. However, Teale (1981, 1984) also noted that the bulk of the research has been correlational in design and, as such, only really scratches the surface of the significance of reading to children. Teale (1981) called for more naturalistic studies that would help educators to learn more about the variations in the literacy orientations through analyses of how children are read to. This knowledge may help with educating schools in how to provide reading and writing instruction which builds upon the foundation a child brings to school as a result of his or her socio-cultural experiences. Cochran-Smith (1984)

supported Teale's (1981, 1984) statement and said, "Patterns of storyreading are cross-nationally and cross-culturally diverse (p.8)."

Importance of Reading Aloud

Teale (1981) summarized the positive relations between early childhood experience in being read to and literacy development, and claimed that reading aloud to children promotes: (1) Language development in prereaders (Burroughs, 1972; Chomsky, 1972; Fodor, 1966; Irwin, 1960; Mackinnon, 1959), (2) Vocabulary development (Durkin, 1978; Burroughs, 1972; Fodor, 1966), (3) Children's eagerness to read (Mason & Blanton, 1971), (4) Learning to read prior to attending school (Durkin, 1966; Teale, 1978), and (5) Success in beginning reading in school (Moon & Wells, 1979; 1979; Durkin, 1978; Wells & Raban, 1978).

Similarly, Becher (1986) noted the following about reading aloud to children:

> Specifically, this practice has been shown to improve children's: (a) receptive and expressive vocabularies; (b) literal and inferential comprehension skills; (c) sentence length; (d) letter and symbol recognition; (e) basic conceptual development extension and expansion; and (f) general interest in books. Reading to the child is also important because it promotes a bond between children and parents, and establishes reading as a valued personal activity, exposes and develops shared topics of interest, promotes positive social-emotional interactions among family members, familiarizes children with a variety of language

> patterns and an expanded vocabulary, and serves as a source of data from which children construct knowledge about rules that govern the reading process. (p.90)

Durkin (1966) reported that children who learned to read before entering first grade were read to by siblings, parents, or another caring adult. Neither race, ethnicity, socioeconomic level, nor I.Q. distinguished between readers and nonreaders; access to print, being read to, parents valuing education, and early writing did. Louzides's (1993) study indicated that a strong background of being read aloud to beginning during infancy has a positive effect on children's choices to read independently in their leisure time.

Storyreading

Although research on classroom story reading is not as extensive as research on storybook reading at home, findings also indicated positive relations between being read to and school achievement (Teale, Martinez & Glass, 1989). Experiences with storybooks in the classroom also promote interest in reading, language development and reading achievement, and growth in writing ability (Galda & Cullinan, 1991; Morrow, 1988).

Feitelson, Kita, and Goldstein (1986) conducted an experimental study in which twenty minutes of daily storybook readings were implemented for a period of six months in three first grade classrooms in a disadvantaged suburb of Haifa. Children in these experimental classes outscored children in control classes on measures of decoding, reading comprehension, and active use of language.

Cochran-Smith (1984) described how storyreading happened in one preschool cla..s and what the consequences were of the literacy events that occurred in that classroom. Although the children she studied were not being taught to read, their interactions with adults around books did result in the growth of important knowledge about books and print.

Morrow, Tracey, Woo, and Pressley's (1999) study of six teachers considered exemplary in first-grade literary instruction revealed that these educators provide a variety of reading experiences, including reading high quality children's literature aloud to the whole class and following up the reading with discussion tied to the theme being studied by the class.

Some studies (Scollon and Scollon, 1981; Heath, 1983; Sulzby and Teale, 1987; Roser, Hoffman, and Farest, 1990) focused on the patterns of storyreading at cross-cultural and cross-national settings. Sulzby and Teale (1987) and Roser, Hoffman, and Farest (1990) studied reading aloud to children speaking different languages in particular. Sulzby and Teale (1987) conducted a longitudinal study of young children's storybook reading in bilingual classrooms. One cohort was followed from preschool until November of kindergarten and another was followed throughout kindergarten. The researchers found that children in both cohorts increased in emergent reading ability across time, but children who were in the preschool were not significantly higher in November of kindergarten compared to kindergartners who had not been in preschool. The ability of these children both to listen to and reproduce connected discourse from

storybooks read to them by their teachers was believed to have important implications for using emergent literacy techniques in bilingual classrooms.

Roser, Hoffman, and Farest's (1990) study concluded that literature-based programs can be implemented successfully in a traditional reading/language arts program serving primarily limited English speaking students from economically disadvantaged home environments schools. Further, there is every indication that these students respond to such a program in the same positive ways as any student would - with enthusiasm for books, with willingness to share ideas, and with growth in language and literacy (p.559).

Reading Aloud to Children At Home

The many different possible ways that storybook reading takes place is well documented. Storyreading patterns are also influenced by culture (Cochran-Smith, 1984). Martinez and Teale (1993) pointed out some patterns of social interactions that occur during storybook reading. These patterns include the age of the child participants (Heath, 1983), the extent to which the child has previously participated in storybook reading (Bus & van IJzendoorn, 1988); the child's familiarity with the text being read (Teale & Sulzby, 1987), and the type of text being read (Bus & van IJzendoorn, 1988). (p. 176)

A few studies have documented that parents have successfully learned selected storybook reading techniques, and some have found that positive effects can be achieved on children's reading, such as the ability to read words out of context (McCormick & Mason, 1986, 1989; Tizzard, Schofield, & Hewisson, 1982; Wilks & Clarke, 1988).

In general, findings from a limited number of studies of narrative booksharing suggest that it can be a principal means for learning about literacy (Mason & Kerr, 1992) and can improve children's concepts about print, listening and expressive vocabularies, comprehension, and interest in books (Sulzby & Teale, 1991). While booksharing in the international research literature has been used to refer to adults reading to children, children reading to adults, or a combination of both (Wilks & Clarke, 1988; Tizzard, Schofield, & Hewisson, 1982), in current studies it refers generally to an adult reading to a child.

The most effective style of booksharing is one in which the parent guides the experience through pointing, directing, asking questions, and requiring the child to connect to his or her own experience (Heath, 1982; Mason & Kerr, 1992; Sulzby & Teale, 1991). Further, parental style of storybook sharing appears to change as children grow older (Heath, 1982; Sulzby & Teale, 1991). Initial highly interactive readings with very young preschoolers gradually give way to more parental reading of longer chunks of text with less interpretation (Sulzby & Teale, 1991).

Studies on family literacy patterns suggest that parents participate in literacy activities besides storytelling and booksharing. The literacy activities observed included reading for entertainment, reading as part of daily living, reading for general information, reading for religious purposes and reading materials besides books. These activities vary between families and family members. Reese, Goldenberg, Loucky, and Gallimore (1989) found that mothers and fathers who assisted with their children's literacy development tended to

have more education than those who did not. Reese (1992), in examining the reading achievement of fifth grade students, found a family history of literacy for high achieving students. Other studies show an array of literacy practices engaged in by parents of low, middle, and high economic backgrounds (Delgado-Gaitan, 1992, 1994; Ortiz, 1992).

The Role of Fathers

Despite the lack of extensive research in paternal early literacy experiences, there have been some attempts at investigating father-child early literacy practices. Studies suggest that paternal early literacy activities range from fathers who rarely read with their children to those who establish consistent reading and writing routines (Ortiz, 1992, 1994; Laosa, 1982).

Durkin (1966) attempted to measure the influence of fathers and mothers on young children's reading achievement in elementary school and made an effort to interview both parents regarding their roles. However, Durkin found it extremely difficult to get fathers to attend the interview sessions to discuss their roles in early reading activities. Their absence at these meetings were often reported as the result of "being on the road," "working during the day and going to school at night," "spending long hours at the office," and "having two jobs." Durkin did find that the few fathers who were interviewed tended to have some positive influence on their children's early reading achievement.

In a later study, Taylor (1983) looked at the ways that parents shared their literacy experiences with young children. Taylor found that although some fathers had very similar literacy experiences as children, these same fathers

developed and used different styles in working with their own children, a process that Taylor feels can result in varied reading experiences for individual children.

Laosa (1982) examined the relationship between parental schooling and behavior toward their children's academic development. He found that although fathers spent less time involved in early literacy practices than their spouses, they often read with their children on a regular basis. Laosa attributed parent-child early literacy practices to increased years of parents' formal education.

Ortiz (1992) investigated the reading activities of a sample of Mexican American fathers and their children who were enrolled in grades K, 1st, and 2nd. He found that demographic variables, such as generation status, education, and income, had a minimal impact on joint early reading and writing practices. Instead, he found that fathers who "shared" child rearing duties with their spouses, as opposed to "dividing" these tasks, were more likely to read with their children, a finding similar to that of Reese, Gallimore, Balzano, and Goldenberg (1991). Reese et al. (1991) found that fathers who assist their spouses with their children's home learning help create conditions in the home which are supportive of academic achievement.

Various researchers have looked at the kinds of reading materials that fathers have shared with their children (Ortiz, 1992, 1994; Ortiz and Stile, 1996; Taylor, 1983). These data suggest that many joint father-child early literacy activities do not necessarily include books per se or formal or structured reading activities such as storybook reading. Ortiz (1992) found that fathers shared literacy activities through a variety of subject areas. For example, recreational

related literacy activities were extremely popular. Fathers and children read print found on board games (e.g., Monopoly; Chutes and Ladders; Life; etc.), played the word-game "hangman," and read personal letters from relatives. Fathers often read to their children the print on video boxes and taught them how to read and calculate the batting averages of their favorite baseball players. Working on crossword puzzles and reading cereal boxes were also sources of enjoyable reading time together. Additional reading interests included the weekly church bulletin, brochures, and newsletters from the fathers' jobs describing company products and upcoming social events.

Parent Reading Styles

A number of studies have illustrated the importance of parent read-aloud styles and patterns on children's literacy development. Flood (1977) investigated the relationship between parental style of reading to young children and the child's performance on selected prereading related tasks. He identified fourteen components of the parent-child reading episode and found five of them important: (1) total number of words spoken by the child, (2) number of questions answered by the child, (3) number of task-related questions asked by the child, (4) warm-up questions asked by the parent, and (5) post-story evaluative questions asked by the parent. He also demonstrated the need for children to be actively involved with the book from beginning to the end.

Shanahan and Hogan (1983, as cited in Owens, 1992) found that parents' reading style is highly related to children's print awareness. Reading aloud activities identified as helping children's print awareness include pre-reading

references to the children's prior experiences, answering the children's questions, and the amount of reading aloud. (p.28).

Roser and Martinez (1985) identified three roles that adults play as they read aloud to children: co-responders, informers/monitors, and directors. As co-responders, adults initiated discussions to describe information in the pictures, share personal experiences, relate the story to the child's life, and encourage the child to respond similarly. As informers/monitors, adults explained aspects of the stories, provided information to broaden the children's knowledge, and evaluated the children's understandings of stories. As directors, adults introduced stories, announced conclusions, and assumed leadership roles in discussion.

Thomas (1985) studied fifteen early readers and fifteen non-early readers for evidence of linguistic and social interactions in the home that might account for children learning to read. Thomas found no instances in which children's questions regarding literacy went unanswered. While parents of both early and non-early readers read to their children, parents of early readers read to their children more times within a day than did parents of non-early readers. Thomas found evidence that parents of early readers structured dialogue to facilitate the meaning of the printed word as they read aloud. This study uncovered numerous instances of parent behaviors that influenced the literacy development of these early readers.

As noted previously, a number of studies have been conducted on the influence of culture on storyreading patterns. There are also researchers who explored the contexts and situations that introduce children to literacy in various

social groups. This kind of research allows for and invites comparative analysis across communities and cultures.

Scollon and Scollon (1981, as cited in Cochran-Smith, 1984, p.20) compared the linguistic socialization and literacy orientation of their own young daughter with those of several Chipewyan children in Fort Chipewyan, Alberta, Canada. They suggested that their daughter's literacy orientation includes the child's view of herself as both reader and writer and her expectation that reading and writing were routine parts of her everyday life. This orientation differed from that of the Chipewyan children, for whom literacy was primarily the responsibility of the church or the school.

Heath's (1983) study illustrated the importance of parent read-aloud styles and patterns on children's literacy development. Heath (1983) reported her study of two non-mainstream communities, one White (Roadville) and one Black (Trackton) in the Piedmont Carolinas, and "the townspeople," or mainstreamers, in the same area. Unlike the children of the townspeople who were middle-class, children from the other two communities had difficulty in school. Heath suggested that this was due, in part, to the fact that upon entering school, children from these two communities had language strategies that were not supportive of or consistent with those needed for success at school learning tasks.

Home-School Collaboration

While several research studies on storyreading by parents and in the classroom exist, Dickinson and Smith's (1992) study is one of the few studies

about the relationship between home and school storyreading. Dickinson and Smith (1992) investigated low-income children's book reading experiences of three- and four-year-olds with their mothers and in-group reading in preschool. Mothers were significantly more likely than teachers to use extending comments, and were less likely to use organizational comments. The study is significant for two reasons: (1) it emphasizes the role of mothers in storyreading, as opposed to the role of fathers discussed by Durkin (1966), Ortiz (1992, 1994), and others, and (2) it shows that the patterns of adults' and preschoolers' talk about books support a model of home-school relationship in which mothers provide an introduction to bookreading that teachers expand by engaging children in cognitively challenging discussions.

While there appears to be a consensus of beliefs about the importance of home-school collaboration (Kellaghan, Sloane, Alvarez, & Bloom, 1993; Schneider & Coleman, 1993), Paratore, Hindin, Krol-Sinclair, and Duran (1999) note that little is actually known about the processes that support effective parent-teacher partnerships, particularly when those partnerships involve immigrant parents.

Parent-Teacher Partnerships

Delgado-Gaitan and Trueba's (1991) research indicates that traditional, school-based models of parent involvement tend to create, rather than eliminate, barriers between home and school by assuming that parents understand American school culture when, in fact, they may have an entirely different set of expectations of schools and their own roles. Further, researchers report that the

development of effective home and school partnerships may be limited by immigrant parents' lack of English proficiency (Rumberger, 1987); by their lack of understanding of the culture of American schools; or, for immigrant parents with limited formal education, by their own insecurity about their ability to help their children.

Because Paratore, Krol-Sinclair, Homza, Lewis-Barrows, Melzi, Sturgis, and Haynes (1995) believe that conferences are the primary vehicle for parent-teacher communication, they studied how conferences improve collaboration between parents and teachers. In this study Paratore et al. used a small sample of four parent-teacher dyads. Parents who participated in the study were immigrants to the United States and were part of the Intergenerational Literacy Project (ILP), a collaborative effort between a nearby university and the local school system. The purpose of the ILP was to support the literacy development of parents, to help parents support their children's literacy development at home, and to provide parents with information about school culture and ways in which they can help their children succeed in school.

Paratore et al.'s (1995) study explored the following areas: ways in which parents and teachers shared the floor during the conference, the influence of literacy samples on topic initiation, the influence of the samples on conversations about school-based literacy, and the influence of the samples on parents' and teachers' understanding of the child's literacy learning. They found that when parents collected samples of their children's home literacy practices and shared them with elementary classroom teachers during parent-teacher conferences,

teachers and parents had collaborative and connected conversations about children's learning.

Because parents were able to use specific samples, they had a specific context in which they could articulate and get answers to questions that had been troubling them about particular assignments or about specific practices they had observed. With the child's home samples as a context, teachers could make explicit suggestions about ways parents could support and extend children's learning.

Parents' and teachers' use of the samples directed the conversation in such a way that there was more of a give-and-take between parents and teachers, with parents having the opportunity at least part of the time to give as well as receive information about the child. According to reports from both parents and teachers, this was different from the teacher-controlled discourse that had occurred in earlier conferences.

As a result, parents and teachers both reported that they had a better understanding of the connections between home and school literacies. In 1999 Paratore, Hindin, Krol-Sinclair, and Duran (1999) reported that they were conducting a follow-up study that extended the work of the 1995 study to 20 parent-teacher dyads over a three-year period.

Paratore et al. (1999) noted that in defiance of what they believe to be positive findings in the results of the 1995 study, there are some aspects of the study that were cautionary. Despite frequent discussions in parents' ILP classes about the differences between home and school literacies, samples were more

school-like rather than a record of "family literacy." The authors were concerned that such learning activities have the potential to displace other family literacy events.

The research of Cazden (1988), Heath (1983), and Purcell-Gates (1995) on the negative consequences of discontinuities between home and school literacy practices, particularly for children who are linguistically and culturally different from the mainstream, support this concern. Despite a number of efforts to instruct parents about schools (Morrow, 1995), and similar efforts to instruct teachers on ways to build on what researchers Moll and Greenburg (1990) have called, "household funds of knowledge", evidence suggests that there is still a gap between children's home and school literacy (McCarthey, 1997).

Other research suggests that these concerns are misplaced and provide a reminder of the pivotal role of families in children's general cognitive and academic development including literacy development (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1984). In some studies, family and home factors have been shown to be more influential than school factors for various cognitive and academic abilities (Becher, 1986). Further, many parents want to help their young children's academic development, including literacy development (Epstein, 1986; Fitzgerald, Spiegel, & Cunningham, 1991), but some have indicated they rarely receive invitations from teachers to become involved in such activities (Epstein, 1986).

Controversy developed over "best" ways to support parents as they help their children. In one model outsiders "deliver" some knowledge to parents (often

through modeling techniques) which the parents then try to use, sometimes after modifying it. Programs based on this model are often called *educational interventions*. A few examples of work that includes this approach may by found in Love and Van Biervliet, 1984; Wilks and Clarke, 1988; and Winter and Rouse, 1990.

In another model outsiders try to become *insider consultants* to the family by helping family members learn about their own literacy interactions and to consider their own strengths. The family works together and alongside the consultant to build new ways of interacting to nurture the children's and others' literacy. Programs based on this model are called *support* programs, based on the premise that providing social support is the critical issue for success. In these programs, interpersonal relationships (rather than knowledge) are the critical issue (Powell, 1993). In practice most models incorporate at least some aspects of an "educational intervention" approach and some of a "support" approach, but there may be great variation in the weight given to education versus support (Powell, 1993).

Some research supports the following selected beliefs about helping parents to help their children. Parents are more likely to use what is gained from a program if there is a one-to-one relationship between the person offering help and the parent; activities are highly structured, concrete, and prescriptive, but permit flexibility for personalization in particular situations; and the parent views the intervention with some sense of partnership with a professional who is

sincere, warm, caring, encouraging, and acting out of kindness or generosity (Dunst & Trivette, 1993; Fisher, 1983).

Parent Tutoring

Topping & Whiteley (1990) and Tizzard, Schofield, & Hewison (1982) suggest that involving parents with home-based parent tutoring is a strategy with potential to improve student achievement and that parent tutoring may be superior to both peer tutoring and tutoring by a teacher. Parent tutoring may impact a child's achievement directly by providing individualized assistance and greatly increasing a child's opportunities to practice important academic skills.

Although children can be tutored in various academic areas including reading, mathematics, spelling (Thurston & Dasta, 1990), and writing (Hasset, Engler, Cooke, Test, Weiss, Heward & Heron, 1984), parent tutoring in reading may be most important. Although reading is a skill necessary for student success in other academic areas (Adams, 1990), it is one of the most complex skills that school children are expected to acquire and reading problems constitute a primary source of special education referrals (Lentz, 1988). Problems with reading may ultimately result in high numbers of adults who are functionally illiterate.

Several suggestions have been made as to how parents can assist their children in learning to read. Suggestions range from "informal" parent tutoring in reading where the timing and content of activities are not delineated clearly, to more formal programs focusing on guided practice with feedback and programs

involving direct instruction of specific reading skills (Crawford, 1985; Leach & Sidall, 1990; Duvall, Delquadri, Elliott, & Hall, 1992).

Informal parent tutoring includes activities such as parents reading signs, magazines, and recipes with one's child, the child telling stories to the parent, and encouraging one's child to think and ask questions about what has been read (Resh & Wilson, 1990). Listening to one's child read or "Hearing Reading" (Crawford, 1985; Hannon, 1987) also may be considered informal. Formal methods of parent tutoring in reading that focus on guided practice and feedback are characterized by specific activities to be engaged in for a specific time. Usually, parent training is required (Thurston & Dasta, 1990). These programs emphasize increasing opportunities to read and receive corrective feedback rather than the direct teaching of new skills. Such programs have included: (a) drill and practice on sight words, reading games, and worksheets (Coates & McLaughlin, 1992; Goddard, 1988; Hourcade & Richardson, 1987); (b) listening to the child read while providing prompts, praise, or corrective feedback (Thurston & Dasta, 1990; Wilks & Clarke, 1988), and (c) specific programs such as Paired Reading (Morgan, 1986; Morgan & Lyon, 1979).

Other formal parent tutoring in reading programs focus on providing explicit instruction on specific reading skills and the introduction of new skills. More time and cost in training parent tutors is involved. Some of these programs require parents to use direct instruction techniques (Rosenshine, 1976). Comparing tutoring methods along these dimensions has led to the suggestion

that programs should be structured (i.e., formal) to be successful (Rasinski & Fredericks, 1989).

Among some of the important questions about parent tutoring in reading that need to be considered are (1) Can parents tutor their children and can they tutor in such a way that the experience is positive for both parent and child? (2) Does parent tutoring in reading produce reading achievement gains in children? and (3) What reading materials should be used in parent tutoring?

Although some beneficial achievement results are reported in the research (Leach & Sidall, 1990; Tizzard et al., 1982), concerns have been raised about parents' skills in tutoring their children and whether the tutoring would be a positive experience for the child. Some teachers may be wary of parents augmenting school-based reading activities (Wolfendale, 1983). Such concerns may depend upon the type of tutoring to be used. For example, although listening to a child read may be considered appropriate by most educators, the use of specific tutoring or error correction strategies might be discouraged (Stacey, 1991).

The research suggests many of these concerns are unfounded. With few exceptions, parents are interested in learning how to help their children educationally and are eager to do so (Stacey, 1991). Both parents and children have reported that they enjoy tutoring activities. More than two-thirds of the children wished to continue with the program in a study conducted by Topping and Whiteley (1990) and several studies have reported that parents successfully

learned to tutor their children (Leach & Sidall, 1990; Tizzard et al., 1982; Topping & Whitely, 1990).

Several studies have indicated the positive effects of parent tutoring on student reading achievement (Crawford, 1985; Leach & Sidall, 1990; Mehran & White, 1988; Tizzard et al., 1982). These studies have ranged from those characterized by informal tutoring (Crawford, 1985) to those providing explicit instruction (Leach & Sidall, 1990; Mehran & White, 1988). Only a handful of studies support the benefits of informal parent tutoring in reading methods.

For example, studies by Crawford (1985) and Tizzard et al. (1982) suggest that "Hearing Reading" (i.e., listening to one's child read) has a positive impact on student reading achievement. However, a study by Hannon (1987) showed no significant impact of "Hearing Reading" on children's reading achievement. Lindsay, Evans, and Jones (1985) reported that informal methods like these may be just as effective as more formal methods (e.g., Paired Reading). Several studies also indicate the positive impact tutoring programs that focus on guided practice and feedback can have on children's reading achievement (Duvall et al., 1992; Goddard, 1988; Thurston & Dasta, 1990; Topping & Whiteley, 1990; Wilks & Clarke, 1988).

Unlike the first two questions, research has left unanswered the question of which instructional materials should be used for the tutoring, children's literature or their in-school reading curriculum. Using children's literature for tutoring at home is one way to expand a child's exposure to reading literature without losing

in-school instructional time. Also, free choice of tutoring materials has been suggested as a means to increase child interest and motivation (Topping, 1987).

For children instructed in basals, skills gained by using literature materials for parent tutoring may not generalize to the classroom environment. Skills gained via tutoring in literature materials may generalize better to a broader domain of reading, however. For these same children, skills gained from parent tutoring in their basal text may generalize to the classroom, yet not generalize as readily to the broader domain of reading. Such issues cannot be resolved except via empirical study.

Summary

The literature reveals a strong body of research on the significance of reading aloud to children. This review discussed the literature about the history of reading aloud to children, the importance of reading aloud, and the connections between reading aloud at home and school. Included in the discussion are the impact of fathers reading aloud to their children and parent-teacher partnerships relative to reading aloud.

Studies on parent-child reading and teacher-student reading have described the different styles and their impact on children's literacy development. The existing body of research shows that parents and teachers exhibited varieties of styles in reading aloud to children, which had important impact on children's literacy development (Durkin, 1966; Teale & Sulzby, 1986). Storyreading plays an important role in children's learning. In addition, parents'

involvement in their young children's early reading development has been shown to be an important prerequisite to school success.

Studies on family literacy patterns suggest that parental participation in literacy activities vary between families and family members (Cochran-Smith, 1984; Crawford, 1985). Although mothers, because of their traditional role in the education of young children, have been the focus of much of the research, studies suggest that fathers want to be involved with their children's literacy development when given opportunities to do things that are in line with the interests and capabilities.

It is clear from the literature that involving parents in their child's learning to read is desirable and possible (Anderson, et al., 1984; Becher, 1986;Epstein, 1986; Fitzgerald et al., 1991; Tizzard et al., 1982; Topping & Whiteley, 1990). Despite concerns raised by educators that parents may do more harm than good, the data do not support this notion. The traditional notion of schools that parents are part of the problem, not part of the solution, is being replaced with the perception that they are part of the solution. This perception is consistent with a more collaborative approach to problem solving.

Although more research needs to be done about parent involvement in the teaching of reading, there appears to be adequate justification for including parents in this aspect of young children's education and numerous reasons to continue to develop and evaluate forms of involvement. Ongoing progress monitoring of instructional materials used for tutoring is important. The question of whether children's literature or their in-school reading curriculum should be

used has yet to be resolved. The use of children's literature for tutoring at home is one way to expand a child's exposure to reading literature without losing in-school instructional time. Researchers have mixed views, however, about the benefits of using children's literature for parent tutoring (Cazden, 1988; Heath, 1983; Purcell-Gates, 1995). For children instructed in basals, skills gained by using literature materials may not generalize to the classroom environment, although these skills may generalize better to a broader domain of reading. For these same children, skills gained from parent tutoring in their basal text may generalize to the classroom, but not generalize as readily to the broader domain of reading. To obtain more definitive answers, more research is needed.

In addition to the need for more research about parent involvement in teaching reading to children, this review showed that there is a need for more studies exploring the home and school connections. In particularly, there needs to be more exploration regarding the process and impact of reading aloud to children with a diverse home background, as well as more studies of cross-cultural and cross-national differences of reading aloud to children.

Present Investigation

The purpose of this study was to describe the effects of a six-week reading intervention. This was conducted by examining and evaluating the attitudes of parents/guardians who read at home with their child. The researcher hosted a reading club held within the school library to encourage parental involvement. During these reading club sessions the parents/guardians were given the opportunity to understand their role in developing literacy skills for their

children. They were also given help and guidance in locating resources that are available to carry out what they learned.

Method

Participants

The participants of the study included interested first grade students and their parents/guardians. General invitations were distributed to all first grade students, including regular, bilingual, and special education children. Participants were limited to the first twenty students who responded with a signed permission slip from their parent/guardian. Other interested students were placed on a waiting list for subsequent studies.

The school was located in an urban, low-income, Abbott district. The composition of the school enrollment was primarily Hispanic (80%), with African American (10%), White (7%), Asian (2%), and other (1%) completing the population as of 10/15/01 (approximate figures). The student participants ranged in age from six to eight years old.

Materials

Prior to implementing the first session, the researcher administered a pre-session questionnaire to the parents/guardians to evaluate their literacy attitudes and beliefs (See Appendix A or B, English or Spanish respectively). A post-session questionnaire (See Appendix C or D, English or Spanish respectively) was also administered at the end of the six weeks of intervention to evaluate and determine any changes in attitudes or beliefs that may have occurred.

The following is a list of the selected books that were read aloud by the researcher to demonstrate and model good literacy skills (intonation in reader's voice, rhythm, articulation, fluency, etc.).

1. The Grouchy Ladybug by Eric Carle
2. The Mitten by Jan Brett
3. There Was an Old Lady That Swallowed a Fly published by Child's Play Ltd.
4. Arthur's Valentine by Marc Brown

   Love Bugs by David A. Carter
5. Arthur's Tooth by Marc Brown
6. Caps For Sale by Esphyr Slobodkina

At the end of each session, assorted emergent and leveled books were available for each child and parent/guardian to select from to read at home. During the week, the participants were expected to practice their newly learned literacy skills while reading their selected book together. They were then instructed to complete an accompanying book report worksheet (Appendix E). Participants completed the appropriate section depicting their opinion of the book they chose to read. This book report worksheet was required to be returned the following session, to use as an "admission ticket" to the next session. The researcher recorded the progress of each child and parent/guardian team on the wall chart, which was located in the hall by the library.

Other materials that were utilized were assorted school supply items such as construction paper, writing paper, pencils, pens, crayons, markers, scissors,

and glue. Each child received a brightly colored tote bag on the first evening to carry their book, book report worksheet, and accompanying surprise treat home. There were light refreshments at the end of each weekly session such as doughnuts, muffins, cookies, juice, and coffee. At the culmination of the six weeks, each participating child received a t-shirt, screen printed with the "Take Time to READ!" logo.

Procedure

At the outset of the program, each participating parent/guardian was issued the pre-session questionnaire (Appendix A or B, English or Spanish). The program contained six, one to one and a half hour sessions. There was an opening activity for everyone so they had the opportunity to practice their oral language development skills. Each child was invited to sit in the "Author's Chair" and share their opinion of the book they read. The second activity was the reading of the selected book for the week by the researcher. During this time the researcher demonstrated and modeled good literacy skills (e.g., left-to-right directionality, articulation, fluency, intonation in the reader's voice, rhythm, predicting outcomes, etc.). The book was then discussed and the children were given an opportunity to answer questions regarding the story to check for oral comprehension of the story. Those students who volunteered to answer questions and share thoughts on the book were given stickers and pencils as reinforcement rewards. The third component of the evening included an opportunity to be able to complete an activity to accompany each book (e.g., stick puppets, circle story, word search, mini-book, paper bag puppet, flap

booklet, etc.). These activities included skills integrated across the curriculum. Lastly, the participants were given the opportunity to select one emergent or leveled book to read and enjoy together at home. They also took a copy of the book report worksheet (Appendix E) to complete at home after reading the book together. When they returned the following week for the next session, they were able to see their progress on the chart displayed in the hall by the library. The entire evening of activities concluded with light refreshments and sharing. Present at all sessions were several bilingual teachers who were able to translate into Spanish, when necessary. Each participant, child and parent/guardian, was able to select a prize from the prize basket just for attending the session. The last session of the study concluded with the administration of the post-session questionnaire (Appendix A or B, English or Spanish) to all parents/guardians. Also at the last session, the researcher awarded each child participant a goodie bag containing a screen-imprinted t-shirt with the "Take Time to READ!" logo, three additional books, and an award certificate for their participation in the program. The parents also received a packet filled with brochures, strategies, and tips for reading with their child. The researcher included a copy of the list of teacher's top 100 books for children and a copy of 100 picture books everyone should know.

Data Analysis

After collecting and reading both the pre-session and post-session questionnaires of the twenty participating parents/guardians, the researcher organized, examined, and evaluated the responses. Also taken into

consideration for interpretation were the observations, dialogues, and sharing from the parents/guardians which were recorded each week by the researcher. The researcher interpreted, in a descriptive report, the effects of the six-week reading club intervention and the attitudes of the participants involved.

Results

This section will present the results of the data collected from the pre and post session questionnaires that were completed by the parents/guardians of the participating first grade students. Although originally twenty, first grade students responded that they would be attending, each session showed the same eleven students attending. The table below reflects the make-up of the student/parent participants for the six-week reading club intervention.

Table 1

Participation Table

Student	Male Student	Female Student	Male Parent	Female Parent
Student # 1		X	X	X
Student # 2	X			X
Student # 3		X		X *
Student # 4		X		X
Student # 5	X			X
Student # 6	X			X
Student # 7	X			X
Student # 8	X			X
Student # 9	X			X
Student # 10	X		X	X *
Student # 11		X		X

* Denotes Grandmother attending each session also

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The initial activity of the intervention was the administration of the pre-session questionnaire (see Appendix A and B). The researcher developed four questions to be answered by the parents/guardians to better understand their own personal reading practices with their child. The questionnaires were administered in English and Spanish making it both comfortable and conducive for the parents to answer honestly and openly. The following table reports the results of the four questions that were asked on the pre-session questionnaire.

Table 2

Question # 1

Do you read **daily** with your child?

Yes	No
7	4

Question # 2

How much time **per week** do you read with your child?

Student	Less than a ½ hr.	½ hr. to 1hr.	1 to 2 hr.	More than 2 hr.
Student # 1	20 minutes			
Student # 2		30 minutes		
Student # 3		45 minutes		
Student # 4	15 minutes			
Student # 5			2 hours	
Student # 6	15 – 30 minutes			
Student # 7	10 minutes			
Student # 8				3 to 4 hours
Student # 9	15 minutes			
Student # 10	15 – 20 minutes			
Student # 11	30 minutes			

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Question # 3

What type of reading material do you select to read with your child? (Check all that apply)

Type of Reading Material	Number checked/Quantity
Pleasure books	10
Magazines	4
Comic books	3
Board games/Video games	5
Newspaper	1
Other (please specify) Environmental signs Basal reader from school	 1 1

Question # 4

How confident are you when you read with your child?

Degree of Confidence	Quantity
No confidence	0
Little/somewhat confident	2
Confident	3
Very confident	6

The post-session questionnaire (see Appendix C and D) differed from the pre-session questionnaire allowing the parents/guardians to express their beliefs and attitudes in a more descriptive, narrative format. Question # 1 asked for the child's gender, which was already reported. Questions two through four are related to both the parent and children's personal preference regarding each session. The researcher asked the parents to select the session they felt

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provoked the greatest interest and enjoyment. The following table reflects their responses.

Table 3

Session	Book Title	Quantity
Session # 1	"The Grouchy Ladybug"	5 *
Session # 2	"The Mitten"	4 *
Session # 3	"Arthur's Tooth"	4 *
Session # 4	"Arthur's Valentine" and "Love Bugs"	3 *
Session # 5	"There Was an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly"	6 *
Session # 6	"Caps For Sale"	5 *

* Several parents/guardians selected more than one session

In question # 3 the researcher asked the parents to rate the four activities (reading the stories, singing the song, book sharing in the "Author's Chair", and the craft activity) conducted during each session. The parents were asked to number their responses from one to four designating most to least favorite. Six out of the eleven parents checked all four activites with no designation of preference. Two parents checked only two activities, showing no preference. The two activites checked were reading the stories and the craft activity. Of the remaining three parents, they all chose reading the stories as their favorite activity followed by singing the song, the craft activity, and book sharing in the "Author's Chair."

Question # 4 asked for the child's preference on the same four activities. The parents recorded their own child's responses. Three children liked all four activities, with only one child showing their preferences. This child rated the

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activities from most to least favorite as singing the song, reading the stories, doing the craft activities, and book sharing in the "Author's Chair." Two children responded that they preferred reading the stories and completing the craft activities the best, with no preference designated for the other activities. The remaining six children responded by only rating their single favorite activity. Four children enjoyed reading the stories, one child enjoyed singing the song, and one child enjoyed completing the craft activity the best.

The remaining questions on the post-session questionniare addressed the possible changes or feelings that may have occurred with either the child or parent and asked for suggestions on improving future workshops. The parents/guardians recorded the comments made by their children. Some of the comments recorded were. . . "It's fun", "I really like doing the crafts", "Singing the song was good", "When is Tuesday, Mommy?", "I liked all the stories", "I liked the Old Lady best", and "Why can't we keep coming?" All eleven parents reported that their child had an increased interest in books now and thoroughly enjoyed reading. One parent reported that their child not only has taken a better interest in reading but also when she completes a story "she makes up her own accompanying craft activity."

Some of the comments made by the parents, regarding changes in their own feelings/attitudes about reading with their child, were as follows: "I enjoy reading the stories with my child and spending that special time with him", "My son pays more attention and shows a greater interest toward reading", "I'm dedicating more time to read with my daughter", "She likes to read more",

"Coming to these sessions and talking in the chair has helped my son come out of his shell", "My child has discovered a new life in books", "He's more enthusiastic about reading now", "He now wants to read to me instead of me to him","My son has ADD and these sessions have really helped him", and "To be honest, my priorities have changed, I now make time to read with him".

The parents all recorded similar comments regarding the workshops, whether they were recorded in English or Spanish. Many of the parents felt that the program was beneficial and should be conducted more frequently. All the parents agreed that the program was excellent, or "muy perfecto" in Spanish.

Discussion

The results of this study confirm and support the findings of Becher (1986), concerning the importance of family involvement in children's literacy development. Becher suggests that parents who read regularly to their children promote positive attitudes toward reading and writing achievement. The researcher noted that the children who attended the six-week reading intervention program with their parents/guardians generally showed an increased interest in reading.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of a literacy program that was designed to promote positive attitudes and emphasize the importance of literacy for children. It was hypothesized that participating parents would develop a positive attitude towards the importance of literacy and that the sessions would be a strong contributing factor in the growth of the children's emergent literacy behaviors and/or reading skills. The parents who attended the

sessions were exposed to an array of hands-on literacy based activities. They were also given tips and strategies on different reading techniques that could be incorporated when reading to their children at home.

The reading intervention program was successful in improving achievement in reading and enhancing the children's interest in literacy based activities. The children expressed a feeling of "being special" because they were invited to come to the sessions and they received extra individualized attention from their parents. Taking part in the program helped parents/guardians acquire insights into the expectations that the school had for their children and helped them to see the connection between their parenting practices and classroom practices. The findings from the study suggest that home literacy practices exert a strong influence upon children's interest in literature.

The researcher recommends further study in family literacy programs that are based on a wide range of traditional and cultural literature. Programs such as these would help create supportive environments that enable children to relate to their own traditions and also broaden their background knowledge about other cultural traditions. Also, programs such as these would show the need for a strong supportive home and school connection.

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Appendix A

Pre-Session Questionnaire

1. Parent/Guardian's sex Male_____ Female_____
2. Your child's sex Male_____ Female_____
3. Your child's age _____years old
4. Your child's grade _____grade
5. Do you read **daily** with your child? _____yes _____no
6. How much time per week do you read with your child? _____

   _____
7. What type of reading material do you select to read with your child? (check all that apply)

   _____books

   _____magazines

   _____comic books

   _____board games/video games

   _____newspaper

   _____other (please specify)_____

   _____
8. How confident are you when you read with your child? (check only one)

   _____no confidence

   _____little/somewhat confident

   _____confident

   _____very confident

Appendix B

Pre-Session Questionnaire

1. sexo del padre/guardián masculino_____ femenino_____
2. sexo de su niño masculino_____ femenino_____
3. anos de su hijo _____años
4. el grado de su niñno _____grado
5. ¿Usted lee **diariamente** con su niño? _____si _____no
6. ¿Cuanto tiempo usted dedica en leer con su nino a la semana?_____

   _____

7. ¿Qúe clase otras lecturas usted elige para leer con su niño?

   (escoga todas las que aplican)_____libros

   _____ revistas

   _____cómicas

   _____juegos de mesa/juegos de video

   _____periódico

   _____otros (especifique)_____

   _____

8. ¿Cuán confidente se siente usted cuando le lee a su niño? (escoga uno)

   _____sin confidencia

   _____poca/muy poca confidencia

   _____confidente

   _____muy confidente

Appendix C

Post-Session Questionnaire

Please take a few minutes and fill out the following questions.

1. Your child's sex Male_____ Female_____

2. Which session did you enjoy the most? (Check only one)
   _____1st workshop - "The Grouchy Ladybug"
   _____2nd workshop - "The Mitten"
   _____3rd workshop - "Arthur's Tooth "
   _____4th workshop - "Arthur's Valentine" and "Love Bugs "
   _____5th workshop - "There Was an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly"
   _____6th workshop - "Caps For Sale"

3. Which of the following activities did **you** like the most?
   _____reading the stories _____singing the song
   _____book sharing _____craft activities

4. Which of the following activities did **your child** like the most?
   _____reading the stories _____singing the song
   _____book sharing _____craft activities

5. Please write down some of the comments that you or your child have about the sessions.
   _____
   _____
   _____

6. Is your child more interested in reading since attending these sessions?
   _____YES _____NO

Post-Session Questionnaire
Page 2

7. Please write any feelings or changes your child has about reading.

_____

_____

_____

8. Has your feelings/attitudes about reading with your child changed any since these sessions?

_____

_____

_____

9. Was the length of the workshop
_____too long _____appropriate _____too short

10. Please write any comments or suggestions you may have on how to improve the workshops for the future. List all of your ideas.

_____

_____

_____

Thank you for taking the time and interest with your child. It was a pleasure working with both you and your child.
Sincerely,
Ms. Colgan

Appendix D

Cuestionario Después de la sección

Favor de tomar algunos minutos para contestar las siguientes preguntas.

1. El sexo de su niño masculino_____ femenino_____

2. ¿Cuál de las secciones usted disfrutó mas? (escoja una)
   _____1er sección - "The Grouchy Ladybug"
   _____2da sección - "The Mitten"
   _____3ra sección - "Arthur's Tooth "
   _____4ta sección - "Arthur's Valentine" and "Love Bugs"
   _____5ta sección - "There Was an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly"
   _____6ta sección - "Caps For Sale"

3. ¿Cuál de las siguientes actividades le gustó más?
   _____lectura de las historias _____cantar canciones
   _____compartir los libros _____actividades de artesanías

4. ¿Cuál de las siguientes actividades a su niño le gustó más?
   _____lectura de las historias _____cantar canciones
   _____compartir los libros _____actividades de artesanías

5. Por favor, escriba algunos comentarios que usted y su niño tengan acerca de las secciones.

   _____
   _____
   _____

6. ¿ Está su niño más interezado en la lectura desde que asistieron a las secciones?
   _____Sí _____No

Cuestionario Después de la sección página 2

7. Por favor, anote algunos de los cambios que usted ha visto en su niño hacia la lectura.

_____

_____

_____

8. ¿Ha cambiado su actitud para leer con su niño desde que asistió a estas secciones?

_____

_____

_____

9. ¿Qué cree acerca de estás secciones?
   _____muy largas _____apropiadas _____muy cortas

10. Por favor, denos sus comentarios o sugerencias en cómo podemos mejorar las secciones para el futuro. Escriba todas sus ideas.

_____

_____

_____

Gracias por tomar su tiempo e interés en su niño. Fue un placer trabajar con usted y su niño.
Sinceramente,
Ms. Colgan

Appendix E

Book Report Worksheet

Name_____

Title of the
book _____

Author of the
book_____

Who is the main character/characters of the book? _____

_____

Draw them here.

Where did the story take
place?_____

_____

Color in the amount of stars to show how well you liked the book.